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21. OCCURRENCE OF LONGTAILED MINIVET *PERICROCOTUS ETHOLOGUS* BANGS & PHILLIPS IN KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK, BHARATPUR, RAJASTHAN

25 December 1989 at Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, dawned with a particularly heavy mist. On an early morning walk one of us (DN) wandered off the trail into an area of salt-bush *Salvadora persica* and found a few lesser whitethroats *Sylvia curruca* and bluethroats *Erithacus svecicus*. Then a party of 25-30 minivets *Pericrocotus* spp. moved rapidly through the bushes and, luckily, stopped just above DN. Small *P. cinnamomeus* and scarlet *P. flammeus* were quickly identified with a couple of adult males of each species as well as several females or immature males.

One of the party was clearly not of these species, appearing smaller than the scarlet, although still much larger than the small minivets. On closer inspection its bill seemed particularly short; and perhaps the main reason why its body and bill seemed small was that its tail was long, much longer than that of the scarlet minivets.

The bird's forehead and underparts were bright yellow, with the top of its head and back a slaty grey. Wings were black, with a prominent bright yellow inverted U-shape formed apparently by some secondary feathers, the greater and primary coverts and two or more primary remiges. Its rump was bright yellow, as was the whole of the outer rectrices, contrasting markedly with the black tail.

DN managed to watch the flock, and this individual, at close range for 10-15 minutes, using

8 x 40 binoculars. In the misty conditions, it seemed that the flock stayed much closer together, and allowed a closer approach, than usual. Reference to Ali and Ripley (1983) threw doubt on the initial identification as an adult female longtailed minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus*, as Plate 71 shows this species to have a bill almost as long as *P. flammeus* and also the tail is not shown in full.

Ewans (1989) and Abdulali and Panday (1978) include the shortbilled minivet *Pericrocotus brevirostris* as an uncommon winter migrant but *P. ethologus* is not recorded. DN was almost prepared to believe that he had been mistaken and had perhaps seen the shortbilled minivet—whose female is also not depicted fully in the HANDBOOK, being obscured by the male—the other author (CS) told him that he had seen and photographed a probable male longtailed minivet at the same locality on 22 December 1988.

On consulting the HANDBOOK we were convinced that both birds, seen in two successive winters, were longtailed minivet *P. ethologus*. The HANDBOOK records them straggling south to Jodhpur and Mount Abu in Rajasthan, so their occurrence at Bharatpur is not surprising. It seems clear that a sustained programme of passerine ringing would probably reveal other examples of this species in Rajasthan.

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November 1, 1990

C. SIVASUBRAMANIAN

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The late K.S. Dharmakumarsinhji recorded *P. ethologus* from Bhavnagar in Gujarat on 23 December 1982 (*JBNHS* 82: 657). A.G. Gaston found it a regular winter visitor in small numbers to the Delhi Ridge, and opined that *P. brevirostris* of the Checklist of the birds of Delhi, Agra and Bharatpur (Abdulali and Panday 1978) referred actually to *P. ethologus* (*JBNHS* 75: 123) —Editors.